

Essay 1 Answer Key

The paragraphs below should help you assess your performance on Assessment 1. It includes, if not all of the ideas and information you are expected to provide, the questions you should have asked and answered to do well on the essay.

First, you should have identified the artwork as the *New York Kouros*, a Greek Archaic freestanding sculpture from the early 6th century BC. Your introductory paragraph would also have been a good place to briefly describe what a *kouros* is, since it is a specific type of Greek sculpture.

Next, a full description should have addressed the visual elements, composition, and stylistic elements of the sculpture. What does it represent? How is the figure standing? What are the different parts of the sculpture? How are the different parts rendered? Are any patterns created through line and shape? How does the sculpture come together as a whole? Is there symmetry, and if so, how is it created? Is the figure naturalistic? In this part of your essay, it is important to have described the figure as a nude male, and to describe his position—standing frontally with one foot in front of the other. You also should have described the face, with its somewhat geometric and schematically carved facial features. The locks of hair are created through the careful repetition of geometric shapes. You should have described the specific lines and shapes used in the rendition of the figure's body. Is there any implied movement? Does the artwork mimic the movement of the actual human body? Does it seem stiff? As far as style is concerned, though there are aspects of the sculpture that show interest in the way the real human body is organized, other aspects tend to veer toward idealization, stylization, or schematization. How so?

To further discuss this sculpture, you should have at some point mentioned the context of Archaic Greece as one of rapid change, expansion, and trade. This might have led you to discuss the Egyptian influence and the way in which *kouros* are a manifestation of this influence. How was their form and function similar to and different from that of Egyptian statuary? How is it a specifically Greek sculpture? At some point, you should have talked about the funerary context of these objects. Who did the statues represent? Were they royal representations? Why were they nude? Did the ancient Greeks walk around nude? Here it is important to have mentioned the ideal of the young athlete and the importance of training at the gymnasium in ancient Greek society.

To situate the artwork in the history of art, you should have mentioned the fact that it was an Archaic artwork and an early *kouros*. How was it an innovation compared to the sculptural arts of the Geometric period? Compared to sculpted human figures of the preceding Geometric period, *kouros* were more naturalistic and monumental. And though geometric shapes still compose the body of the *kouros*, they do so in a less schematic way than in Geometric period sculptures. The *New York Kouros* is an early *kouros* though, and is much stiffer and less naturalistic than many of those that followed it. Therefore, you could also have situated the sculpture in the larger stylistic progression known as the “classical style” of the 5th-century BC. What does this evolution reveal about Greek society?